

He Who Humbles Himself Will Be Exalted

The Apostle Ivory at the Louvre (OA 3317), Heraclius's Entry into Jerusalem, and the Depiction of Imperial Humility

PHILIPP NIEWÖHNER

Byzantine ivories are precious, rare, and often mysterious, and thus fascinating for laymen and scholars alike. This facilitated their survival in various collections, but their provenance and function are in many cases obscure. Some of the most sumptuous specimens have given rise to numerous hypotheses regarding their attribution, dating, and interpretation, as with, for example, the Barberini and Trier ivories, Leo's scepter or comb, and the David and Troyes caskets.¹ In trying to solve the ivories' mysteries and to elaborate earlier, less germane hypotheses, generations of art historians have described the carvings with increasing attention to detail, leading to more refined observations that unlock new aspects and novel historical contexts. As the lack of certain knowledge maintains interest and keeps the discussion alive, some of the most enigmatic artifacts have come to be known best; and today they range among the signature pieces of the discipline.

The beneficial effect of such dialectics to better understand otherwise unknowable objects is brought out by comparison with an ivory that, since its initial publication at the turn of the twentieth century, has been mostly forgotten: the Apostle ivory at the Louvre (Fig. 1). The ivory, which includes a near three-dimensional relief and a complex iconography, is as large, impressive, and puzzling as its famous counterparts. A seated apostle—portrayed as a saint

as well as a biblical figure in ancient garments—is surrounded by standing men in Byzantine dress, with a gate and peopled city as architectural backdrop. Awareness of the Apostle ivory is so far limited to catalogue entries that do not mention various outstanding and, as we shall see below, significant and diagnostic features, in particular a protruding bump on the apostle's forehead and the relatively large size and imperial attire of the figure to his right. The present contribution attempts to change this by proposing a new reading of the iconography.

After a summary of the state of research, the discussion starts with the imperial figure, because—as shall become apparent—that is also how the ivory was conceived in the first place—that is, to tell a story about one particular emperor. Next comes the gate in the background; only after the scene has thus been set does it become possible to make better sense of the apostle and the bump on his forehead. This in turn enables considerations of iconology, historical context, intended message, missing parts, and, finally, the ivory's position within the history of Byzantine art.

State of Research

The Louvre purchased the Apostle ivory (inv. OA 3317) in 1893 from Émile Meyer,² who is said to have bought

1 For bibliography with references to many more publications, see nn. 22 (Barberini ivory), 113 (Trier ivory), 114 (Leo's comb), 15 and 115 (David casket), and 16 (Troyes casket).

2 The Louvre's inventory documents that Émile Meyer lived at 9, rue Saint-Lazare in Paris but does not provide any other information as to his identity or occupation, as Catherine Adam-Sigas, cheffe du service d'études et de documentation, kindly informed me. H. C. Evans

Fig. 1.
Apostle ivory at the
Louvre, inv. OA 3317.
Photo by Jean-Gilles
Berizzi, 2002; courtesy of
the Musée du Louvre.



with B. Ratliff, eds., *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century* (New York, 2012), 44–45, no. 23 (G. Bühl), identifies the seller as the Parisian painter of the same name, but the latter was listed at the Salons of 1892 and 1894 as well as in the directory of 1893 with a different address (57, rue de Dunkerque). Moreover, the Salons of 1892 through 1895 list 9 rue Saint-Lazare as the address of the enamelist Alfred-Bernard Meyer: Musée d'Orsay, "Salons 1673–1914," <https://salons.musee-orsay.fr/>; *Paris-adresses: Annuaire général de l'industrie et du commerce. Corps constitués, administrations, professions libérales, propriétaires, rentiers, etc. de Paris et du département de la Seine* (Paris, 1893), 642. Alfred-Bernard Meyer (1832–1904) was related to the cavalierist Émile Meyer, with whom he shared his father's estate in 1857,

the piece from an unnamed Venetian dealer, who in turn claimed to have acquired it in the relatively distant region of Piedmont, on the other side of Italy.³ On an unknown occasion before the ivory's arrival at

one year before the homonymous painter was born, and who could have been the seller in question: *L'Industriel alsacien: Journal de l'industrie, du commerce et de l'agriculture* 23/101 (17 December 1857), 3.

3 G. Schlumberger, "Un ivoire chrétien inédit," *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 1–2 (1894): 165–70; repr. in G. Schlumberger, *Mélanges d'archéologie byzantine: Monnaies, médailles, méreaux, jetons, amulettes* [...] (Paris, 1895), 193–98.



Fig. 2.
Apostle ivory at the Louvre
with restored parts marked
by hatching. The dark
colored lap of the seated
apostle figure constitutes a
separate piece of ivory, has
been attached, and may or
may not be original. Image
courtesy of the Musée du
Louvre / Agnès Cascio
and Juliette Levy, 2001.

the Louvre, the lower third of the plaque was restored, including parts of the standing figures in the front row, each of which has a vertical break line and visible joint that runs diagonally from shoulder to ankle (see Fig. 1). The restorations included the heads of the outer figures but not those of the seated apostle and the two standing figures to his right and left, all of which are original (Fig. 2).⁴ The top of the ivory has suffered much

breakage, too, and parts of the architecture as well as the people therein are lost completely.

The flat back has two holes that were identified as modern drillings in 2001, when the ivory was examined by two specialist restorers (Fig. 3).⁵ The holes appear to date from the modern period and to attest to some

4 D. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux: V^e–XV^e siècle* (Paris, 2003), 55–57, no. 10.

5 The technical examination was carried out by Agnès Cascio and Juliette Levy and is referenced by Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, 55–57. Adam-Sigas kindly provided a copy of the full report of thirteen pages.

Fig. 3.
Apostle ivory at the Louvre,
back. Photo by Jean-Gilles
Berizzi, 2002; courtesy of
the Musée du Louvre.



reuse or mounting from before 1893. The bottom of the back side is set off by a horizontal fissure and has been restored, but continuous vertical cracks look as if the top and bottom were made from the same elephant tusk that had been cut apart. From the technical examination in 2001, however, it was concluded that the cracks on the bottom back part are artificial and were man-made in order to make the restoration look original. The materials that were employed in the various restorations on both sides of the ivory are not homogenous: some restorations consist of light beige ivory, others are medium beige in color, and yet others are made of white ivory with an ochre patina. Apparently, the restorations did not source their ivory from a single new tusk but employed different older pieces. Binocular magnifiers reveal traces of a uniformly beige coating

that may have been applied in order to hide the heterogeneous restorations.⁶

The plaque is 15 cm high, 12 cm wide, and up to 3.2 cm thick. The grain pattern on the reverse is wider at the top and narrows toward the bottom, an indication of the narrow, pointed end of the tusk from which the plaque was cut. The right and left sides of the relief are fully carved, even where they curve backward consistent

6 The ivory was cleaned in 1975 and again in 2001. In 2001, cotton pads moistened with saliva were employed to attenuate the coloration of the restored parts. The cleaning of 1975 is only attested by the invoice of the restorer, who did not document a method, but in photographs from before that date, the ivory looks more uniform, and earlier publications make note of few, if any, of the restorations.



Fig. 4.
Apostle ivory at the
Louvre as seen from the
left. Photo by Jean-Gilles
Berizzi, 2002; courtesy of
the Musée du Louvre.

with the curvature of the elephant tusk (Fig. 4).⁷ The curving sides add to an illusion of three-dimensional depth that is otherwise achieved by deep undercutting, figures that appear to stand inside the three shaded gateways, and the two angled towers that flank the gate and are carved as if seen in perspective.

Gustave Schlumberger suggested that the ivory depicts St. Paul in front of the city of Rome,⁸ but Josef

Strzygowski pointed to the stepped merlons of the gate as a distinctly Near Eastern feature and thus identified the seated apostle as St. Mark outside of the city of Alexandria.⁹ According to Strzygowski, St. Mark is here depicted as the first bishop of Alexandria and is surrounded by thirty-five successors, which led Strzygowski to attribute the carving to Egypt and to the reign of the thirty-sixth bishop of Alexandria, patriarch Anastasios Aprozgatos (607–609).

7 For a photograph of the right side, see Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, 56.

8 Schlumberger, “Un ivoire chrétien inédit.”

9 J. Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom: Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst* (Leipzig, 1901), 71–75, figs. 30–31.

Strzygowski's Egyptian attribution is still maintained today without alternative,¹⁰ although later art historians have noted that at least some of the alleged successor bishops appear to be clad in secular dress,¹¹ and other Byzantine ivories that were believed to have been made in Egypt have since been attributed to Constantinople.¹² Moreover, Strzygowski's reading ignores numerous details that are better preserved than the restored dresses in the front row and require explanation, leading to a different understanding of the iconography, as the following shall show.

The Emperor

Strzygowski treats the standing figures that surround the seated apostle as a homogenous group of bishops, and others have confirmed that all of them are or were originally bearded,¹³ but the two men on the apostle's right, one in front of the chair and the other behind, have different coiffures. Theirs are the only foreheads to be framed by curls (Fig. 5), as was customary among the

Byzantine elite but not the clergy. In addition, the man in front, who occupies the position of greatest honor immediately next to the apostle, is larger than the other bystanders but not as large as the apostle, and the man in question wears what appears to be a laurel wreath. His garment may be identified as a *chlamys* or cloak that is fastened on his right shoulder by a jeweled fibula or brooch. The shoulder with the fibula and the parting of the cloak are part of the original ivory, and the restoration of the lower body confirms that the dress is to be reconstructed as a *chlamys* (Fig. 1). The *chlamys* was commonly worn by Byzantine emperors and in combination with the jeweled fibula constituted a major imperial insignia.¹⁴

A laurel wreath atop the man's curls might then be understood as a *corona triumphalis* or victor's crown, such as was customarily offered to and worn by the emperor on his *adventus* or ceremonial arrival at a city. Attestations include middle Byzantine adventus scenes on the David and Troyes caskets: the former shows David, who holds Goliath's head in one hand and receives a bound victor's wreath with the other as he approaches the gate of Jerusalem, where he is additionally greeted by a clapping dancer, a person with outstretched hands, and a person who opens the gate.¹⁵ The Troyes casket illustrates two triumphant emperors on horseback flanking a city with an open gate through which a city personification offers a victor's crown, while people on the walls and in the windows raise their hands in acclamation (Fig. 6).¹⁶ Actual adventus ceremonies are described in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus's tenth-century treatise on imperial military expeditions.¹⁷ The treatise as it survives

10 *DACL* 1.1, 1119–24, fig. 273, s.v. “Alexandrie (archéologie)” (H. Leclercq); D. Bénazeth, “Alexandrie chrétienne,” *Dossiers d'archéologie* 201 (1995): 68–72; S. J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (Cairo, 2004), 1–2; C. Fluck et al., eds., *Egypt: Faith after the Pharaohs* (London, 2015), 32, no. 21.

11 K. Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York, 1979), 544–46, no. 489 (N. P. Ševčenko); Evans, *Byzantium and Islam*, 44–45, no. 23; Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, 57.

12 J.-P. Caillet, “Remarques sur l'iconographie christo-mariale des grands diptyques d'ivoire du VI^e siècle: Incidences éventuelles quant à leur datation et origine,” in *Spätantike und byzantinische Elfenbeinbildwerke im Diskurs*, ed. G. Bühl et al. (Wiesbaden, 2008), 17–29; M. C. Carile, “Ivory Production: Commerce, Culture, and Power,” in *Ravenna and the Traditions of Late Antique and Early Byzantine Craftsmanship*, ed. S. Cosentino, Millennium-Studien 85 (Berlin, 2020), 115–52, at 141. Cf. the limited range of Byzantine ivories from Alexandria that does not include anything comparable to the Apostle ivory; G. Bühl, “The Making of Early Byzantine Pyxides,” in Bühl et al., *Spätantike und byzantinische Elfenbeinbildwerke*, 9–16; E. Rodziewicz, *Ivory and Bone Sculpture in Ancient Alexandria*, Antiquités alexandrines 2 (Alexandria, 2016), 78–103.

13 Schlumberger, “Un ivoire chrétien inédit,” 166: “Tous également portent la barbe courte, arrondie. Si ceux du premier rang paraissent imberbes, c'est par suite du frottement et de l'usure des siècles qui ont presque effacé les traces de la barbe.” Cf. W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, Kataloge vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Altertümer 7, 3rd ed. (Mainz, 1976), 96, no. 144, pl. 76.

14 *RBK* 2, 539–40, s.v. “Fibel” (K. Wessel); *RBK* 3, 411–12, s.v. “Insignien” (K. Wessel); U. Gehn, *Ehrenstatuen in der Spätantike: Chlamydati und Togati*, Spätantike, frühes Christentum, Byzanz, Reihe B 34 (Wiesbaden, 2012), 27–28.

15 A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, *Kästen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1979), 64, no. 123, pl. 71e.

16 H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom, eds., *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261* (New York, 1997), 204–6, no. 141 (H. Maguire); A. Walker, *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.* (New York, 2012), 57–64.

17 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, ed. and trans. J. F. Haldon, CFHB 28 (Vienna, 1990), 139 (C) 696–97.



Fig. 5. Apostle ivory at the Louvre, detail of the heads of the apostle and the two men that flank him on his right. Photo by Jean-Gilles Berizzi, 2002; courtesy of the Musée du Louvre.

today is a compilation that includes much earlier information; it relates, exceptionally, that Justinian I (r. 527–565) in the thirty-third year of his reign entered Constantinople “through the gate of Charisios, where the senate and the Eparch of the City met him, *without crowns*.”¹⁸ The treatise then describes in great detail how Basil I (r. 867–886) and Theophilos (r. 829–842) each received his victor’s crown and wreath at the Golden Gate of Constantinople,¹⁹ as did John Tzimiskes (r. 969–976).²⁰ Likewise, the fourth-century

silver plate from Kerch,²¹ the sixth-century Barberini ivory,²² and the middle Byzantine silk tapestry known as the Gunthertuch²³ all show triumphant emperors on

18 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Three Treatises*, 139 (C) 707–10 (emphasis added).

19 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Three Treatises*, 142–44, 148 (C) 772, 845.

20 John Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. H. Thurn, CFHB 5 (Berlin, 1973), 16, 18. For commentaries and more examples, see M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), 210; H. Hunger, “Reditus imperatoris,” in *Fest und Alltag in Byzanz*, ed. G. Prinzing and D. Simon (Munich, 1990), 17–35, 179–84, at 22–30.

21 R. E. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Aldershot, 2004), 20–23, fig. 1.8; M. Beyeler, *Geschenke des Kaisers: Studien zur Chronologie, zu den Empfängern und zu den Gegenständen der kaiserlichen Vergabungen im 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Munich, 2011), 299–300, no. 67.

22 A. Cutler, “Barberiniana: Notes on the Making, Content, and Provenance of Louvre OA. 9063,” in *Tesserae: Festschrift für Josef Engemann*, ed. E. Dassmann and K. Thraede, *JbAC* suppl. 18 (Münster, 1991), 329–39; repr. in A. Cutler, *Late Antique and Byzantine Ivory Carving*, *Variorum Collected Studies* 617 (Aldershot, 1998), IV; Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, 49–54, 74, no. 9; M. Cristini, “*Eburnei nuntii*: I dittici consolari e la diplomazia imperiale del VI secolo,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 68 (2019): 489–520.

23 G. Prinzing, “Das Bamberger Gunthertuch in neuer Sicht,” *BSI* 54 (1993): 218–31; G. Prinzing, “Nochmals zur historischen Deutung des Bamberger Gunthertuches auf Johannes Tzimiskes,” in *Byzantium, New Peoples, New Powers: The Byzantino-Slav Contact Zone, from the*



Fig. 6. Line drawing (*top*) and photograph (*bottom*) of a Middle Byzantine ivory casket in the cathedral treasury of Troyes, France. Drawing from A.-F. Arnaud, *Voyage archéologique et pittoresque dans le département de l'Aube et dans l'ancien diocèse de Troyes* (Troyes, 1837), plate following p. 184; photo by Erin L. Thompson.

horseback as they are presented with victor's wreaths or crowns. In addition, martyrs were also handed wreaths or crowns upon their arrival in heaven, as seen, for example, on the sixth-century apse mosaic in San Vitale in Ravenna or the ivory diptych in the cathedral treasury at Milan.²⁴

Returning to the Apostle ivory and understanding the figure in question as imperial on account of his dress, his exact identity may be deduced from the stepped merlons that appear to locate the scene in the Near East, as Strzygowski has pointed out. As early Byzantine emperors were not in the habit of leaving their residence in Constantinople,²⁵ this excludes all but one, who in the period in question ventured as far as the Near East and triumphantly entered a city there: Heraclius (r. 610–641), when he defeated the Persians and returned the True Cross to Jerusalem, where he was ritually received with an adventus ceremonial.²⁶

As Constantin Zuckerman argues,²⁷ Heraclius's adventus at Jerusalem, as described by George of Pisidia in *In restitutionem sanctae crucis* (On the Restoration of the Holy Cross),²⁸ should have taken place before

the emperor returned to Constantinople and started to be depicted with a bushy mustache and a long beard.²⁹ Coins from the first two decades of Heraclius's reign (as well as some later ones) portray him without a mustache and either with no beard or only a short one.³⁰ According to Cedrenus, Heraclius had shaved immediately upon assuming power, in accordance with imperial custom.³¹ As we shall see, the identification with Heraclius and his visit to Jerusalem fits and can be confirmed by various other details of the ivory.

The Gate

Heraclius arrived at Jerusalem from the north³² and was met by the acting patriarch Modestus and other citizens outside of the city, which he then entered triumphantly to joyful acclamation by the people.³³ Such honorific receptions and ceremonious entrances adhered to established rituals, which are attested in more detail for Constantinople, where Heraclius was received in a similar manner.³⁴ At the capital, major imperial processions would typically pass through the Golden

Ninth to the Fifteenth Century, ed. M. Kaimakamova et al., Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia 5 (Kraków, 2007), 123–32; M. Restle, “Das Gunthertuch im Domschatz von Bamberg,” in *Byzantina Mediterraena: Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. K. Belke et al. (Vienna, 2007), 547–68; S. Ruß, “Sogenanntes Gunthertuch: DMB Inv.-Nr. 2728/3–13,” in *Die Kunstdenkmäler von Oberfranken*, vol. 8.4.2.1: *Das Domstift*, vol. 2, *Ausstattung, Kapitelsbauten, Domschatz*, ed. M. Exner (Bamberg, 2015), 1815–58.

24 F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. 1, *Geschichte und Monumente* (Wiesbaden, 1969), 112, 119, 231; Z. Frantová, *Heresy and Loyalty: The Ivory Diptych of Five Parts from the Cathedral Treasury in Milan* (Brno, 2014), 182–83.

25 S. Destephen, “Les déplacements du prince dans l'Orient tard-antique,” in *Le gouvernement en déplacement: Pouvoir et mobilité de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, ed. S. Destephen et al. (Rennes, 2019), 137–59, at 147–49.

26 T. Raum, “The Reinvention of the Soldier-Emperor under Heraclius,” in *Trends and Turning Points: Constructing the Late Antique and Byzantine World*, ed. M. Kinloch and A. MacFarlane (Leiden, 2019), 133–47; N. Viermann, *Herakleios, der schwitzende Kaiser: Die oströmische Monarchie in der ausgehenden Spätantike*, Millennium-Studien 89 (Berlin, 2021), 29–33, 150–60; J. Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War of Antiquity* (New York, 2021).

27 C. Zuckerman, “Heraclius and the Return of the Holy Cross,” in *Constructing the Seventh Century*, ed. C. Zuckerman, *TM* 17 (Paris, 2013), 197–218, at 201–4.

28 Giorgio di Pisidia, *Poemi*, vol. 1, *Panegirici epici*, ed. and trans. A. Pertusi (Ettal, 1959), 225–39.

29 W. Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini: Rekonstruktion des Prägaufbaues auf synoptisch-tabellarischer Grundlage*, vol. 3, *Von Heraclius bis Leo III. / Alleinregierung (610–720)*, Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission 10 = DenkWien 148 (Vienna, 1981), 85; P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), 94.

30 E.g., *DOC* 2.1: 264–65 (nos. 51, 52, pl. 9, Constantinopolitan semisses), 368, 371 (nos. 275, 281, pl. 21). Cf. H. C. Evans, “Heraclius,” in Evans, *Byzantium and Islam*, 14–16, nos. 4–5.

31 *Georgius Cedrenus*, ed. I. Bekker, *CSHB* 32, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1838–39), 1:714.5–6. Cf. B. Baldwin, “Physical Descriptions of Byzantine Emperors,” *Byzantion* 51.1 (1981): 8–21, at 19.

32 C. de Boor, ed., *Theophanis Chronographia*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883–85), 1:328 (AM 6120 [mistakenly 6020 in book]); C. Mango and R. Scott, trans., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), 458–59 (AM 6120); R. G. Hoyland, trans., *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, *TTH* 57 (Liverpool, 2011), 83–85; M. Breydy, ed. and trans., *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien: Ausgewählte Geschichten und Legenden kompiliert von Sa'id ibn Baṭṭiq um 934 AD*, *CSCO* 471–78 = *Scriptores Arabici* 44–45, 2 vols. (Leuven, 1985), 1:chap. 30, §271. Cf. Zuckerman, “Heraclius and the Return of the Holy Cross,” 212.

33 Giorgio di Pisidia, *Poemi*, 1:225; Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk*, 1:chap. 30, §271; R. W. Thomson and J. Howard-Johnston, trans. and comm., *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, *TTH* 31, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1999), 1:90, §131, chap. 41. Cf. S. G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), 84–86.

34 MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 86–89; McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 70–72.

Gate, with its monumental triple entrance and flanking marble towers, and continue along the colonnaded main street, the Mese.³⁵ Something similar would have happened in Jerusalem, where Heraclius likely entered through the north gate, the early Byzantine city's only triple gate with a pair of flanking towers that also gave way onto the city's colonnaded main street.³⁶

Today's north gate is called Gate of the Column or Damascus Gate, which it dates from the Ottoman period and has only a single passage, but excavation has revealed that it is built over the remains of a Roman gate that had three passageways and a pair of flanking towers.³⁷ The Roman gate was used throughout late antiquity and the early Byzantine period, and the contemporaneous mosaic map at Madaba in Jordan shows

how Jerusalem's north gate and the colonnaded main street connected via a semicircular square with a central column (Fig. 7).³⁸ This column (Ar. *amūd*) appears to have given the gate its modern name (Bāb al-ʿAmūd) first attested in Arabic sources, suggesting that the column remained in place for some time after the Arabs conquered Jerusalem in 638.³⁹ Likewise, the stepped merlons that form the most outstanding feature of today's Ottoman gate may also go back to ancient tradition (Fig. 8).⁴⁰ No other gate of Jerusalem is similarly decorated, and the Ottomans could well have adopted the stepped merlons in this particular case because they had always been an outstanding feature of the north gate. Such a historicist reference would be in keeping with the overall character of the Ottoman defenses of Jerusalem, which "were more symbolic than actually defensive, for by that time gunpowder technology had already rendered such massive fortifications an anachronism. More than anything, Sulaiman [the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566)]'s costly endeavor should be seen as an act of homage . . . to ancient times and included all preceding epochs of Islamic history."⁴¹

In general, the tradition of stepped merlons goes back to ancient Near Eastern fortifications and sanctuaries, where it also had a decorative aspect, as, for example, with the *sima* at the eaves of the Roman Temple

35 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 147, 156, 170, 173, 178, 207–13, 220; A. Berger, "Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions in Constantinople," in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoğlu (Leiden, 2001), 73–87; M. Meier, "Der 'Triumph Belisars' 534 n. Chr.," in *Säkulare Prozessionen: Zur religiösen Grundierung von Umzügen, Einzügen und Aufmärschen*, ed. R. Conrad et al., *Colloquia historica et theologica* 6 (Tübingen, 2019), 43–61.

36 C. Mango, "The Temple Mount, AD 614–638," in *Bayt al-Maqdis: ʿAbd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, part 1, ed. J. Raby and J. Johns, *Oxford Studies in Islamic Art* 9 (Oxford, 1992), 1–16, at 15, and D. Bahat, "The Golden Gate and the Date of the Madaba Map," in *The Madaba Map Centenary, 1897–1997: Travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad Period*, ed. E. Alliata and M. Piccirillo (Jerusalem, 1999), 254–56, suggest Jerusalem's Golden Gate because a later Latin tradition has Heraclius enter Jerusalem through the same gate as Jesus who, according to Latin tradition, used the Golden Gate. The same later tradition has Heraclius carrying the True Cross on his back, although Nicephorus, *Short History* 18 (ed. and trans. C. Mango, Washington, DC, 1990, 66), more reliably refers to a sealed and presumably box-shaped relic container. The Latin tradition appears to be inspired by the way Jesus carried the cross to Golgotha, and such a willful analogy also devalues the claim that Heraclius entered through the same gate as Jesus. Cf. S. Borgehammar, "Heraclius Learns Humility: Two Early Latin Accounts Composed for the Celebration of *Exaltatio Crucis*," *Millennium* 6 (2009): 145–201, at 187, n. 100; J. W. Drijvers, "Heraclius and the *Restitutio Crucis*: Notes on Symbolism and Ideology," in *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation*, ed. G. J. Reinink and B. H. Stolte (Leuven, 2002), 175–90, at 185–86; J. Magness, *Jerusalem through the Ages: From Its Beginnings to the Crusades* (New York, 2024), 351.

37 G. J. Wightman, *The Damascus Gate, Jerusalem: Excavations by C.-M. Bennett and J. B. Hennessy at the Damascus Gate, Jerusalem, 1964–66*, BAR International Series 519 (Oxford, 1989); M. Magen, "Excavations at the Damascus Gate, 1979–1984," in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. H. Geva, trans. J. Shadur (Jerusalem, 1994), 281–86; S. Weksler-Bdolah, "The Fortifications of Jerusalem in the Byzantine Period," *ARAM* 18–19 (2006–7): 85–112, at 89–91.

38 M. Avi-Yonah, *The Madaba Mosaic Map* (Jerusalem, 1954), 52. For some qualification as to the function of the column, see S. Weksler-Bdolah and D. Levi, "The Starting Point of the Imperial Roads in Aelia Capitolina," in *The Art of Siege Warfare and Military Architecture from the Classical World to the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Eisenberg and R. Khamisy (Oxford, 2021), 101–10.

39 Later medieval references to the column appear doubtful: P. Baumann, "Ein spätantikes Säulenmonument am Jerusalemer Nordtor? Zu einem Detail auf der Mosaiklandkarte von Madaba/Jordanien," *Das Münster* 53 (2000): 38–47; R. Aist, *The Christian Topography of Early Islamic Jerusalem: The Evidence of Willibald of Eichstätt (700–787 CE)* (Turnhout, 2009), 82–88.

40 See also A. Salzmann, *Jérusalem: Études et reproductions photographiques des monuments de la Ville Sainte depuis l'époque judaïque jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1856), 1:83, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k131826m/f444.item>.

41 Y. Tabbaa, "An Image of What Once Was: The Ayyubid Fortifications of Jerusalem," in *Ayyubid Jerusalem: The Holy City in Context, 1187–1250*, ed. R. Hillenbrand and S. Auld (London, 2009), 460–68, at 467–68, pl. 26.4. See also Y. Natsheh, "The Architecture of Ottoman Jerusalem," in *Ottoman Jerusalem: The Living City, 1517–1917*, ed. S. Auld and R. Hillenbrand, 2 vols. (London, 2000), 1:583–655, at 601–4.



Fig. 7. Early Byzantine Jerusalem as seen from the west and depicted in the center of the mosaic map at Madaba in Jordan. To the left, or north, is the Gate of the Column or Damascus Gate, flanked by a semicircular square with a columnar monument on a stepped base. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Madaba_map.jpg.

of Bel at Palmyra.⁴² In Christian iconography, stepped merlons could signify Jerusalem—as above a gate in an early Byzantine gospel illumination of the Cursing of the Fig Tree (Codex Sinopensis, fol. 30v),⁴³ for example, or around the perimeter of heavenly Jerusalem in several illustrated copies of St. Beatus's *Commentaria in Apocalypsin* (*Commentary on the Apocalypse*) from early medieval Spain (e.g., Morgan Beatus, fol. 222v, and St. Sever Beatus, fols. 207v–208r),⁴⁴ where the motif

was well known through its widespread use in the architecture of al-Andalus.⁴⁵

Given these visual conventions, the gate on the Apostle ivory appears to be in keeping with what an ivory carver could have known or been told about the north gate of Jerusalem.⁴⁶ This may well include the oval shields that flank the central gateway on the ivory, seven on each side. Such serial shield and weapon friezes were common on ancient fortifications,⁴⁷ particularly around

42 A. Bounni, “Couronnement des sanctuaires du Proche-Orient hellénistique et romain: Origine et développement du merlon,” *Topoi: Orient–Occident* 9.2 (1999): 507–25; A. Schmidt-Colinet, “Die Bekrönung der Tempel im hellenistisch-römischen Syrien: Neue Überlegungen zu den Zinnen im Belheiligtum von Palmyra,” *RA* (2022): 57–77.

43 A. Grabar, *Les peintures de l'Évangélaire de Sinope* (Bibliothèque nationale, suppl. gr. 1286): *Réproduites en facsimilé* (Paris, 1948), 14, pl. 5.

44 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.644, and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8878. See B. Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium*, RQ suppl. 42 (Rome, 1987), 105.

45 R. Walker, *Art in Spain and Portugal from the Romans to the Early Middle Ages: Routes and Myths* (Amsterdam, 2016), 157, 170–71, 246.

46 Considering that Jerusalem had recently been sacked and occupied by the Persians and that no comparable Byzantine ivory carving is known from anywhere in the Levant (see n. 12), the Apostle ivory was probably made elsewhere and by a carver unfamiliar with Jerusalem. In light of the imperial reading advanced in this paper, imperial workshops in Constantinople appear likely.

47 A. W. McNicoll, *Hellenistic Fortifications: From the Aegean to the Euphrates* (New York, 1997), 129; A. F. Erol, “An Analysis on Illustrations of War Materials on City Gates: Pamphilian, Pisidian and Isaurian Regions,” *Anodos: Studies of the Ancient World* 4–5



Fig. 8. Ottoman Gate of the Column or Damascus Gate, the north gate of Jerusalem, as viewed from the north. Drawing from E. Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, trans. T. G. Bonney, 2 vols. (London, 1864), 2:pl. VII.

gates, some of which continued in use throughout late antiquity;⁴⁸ the early Byzantine archangel inscription from a gate of Miletus in Asia Minor may depict just

(2004–5): 69–77; S. Müth et al., “Symbolische Funktionen,” in *Ancient Fortifications: A Compendium of Theory and Practice*, ed. S. Müth et al. (Oxford, 2016), 126–58, at 144, fig. 10.

48 A. M. Mansel, “Osttor und Waffenreliefs von Side (Pamphylien),” *AA* (1968): 239–79; A. Machatschek and M. Schwarz, *Bauforschungen in Selge* (Vienna, 1981), 36–46; U. Peschlow, “Das Südtor von Perge,” in *Euergetes: Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Halûk Abbasoğlu zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. I. Delemen et al. (Antalya, 2008), 971–87, at figs. 2 and 12; I. Jacobs, “Gates in Late Antiquity in the Eastern Mediterranean,” *BABesch* 84 (2009): 197–213, at 203; U. Peschlow, “Mauerbau in krisenloser Zeit? Zu spätantiken Stadtbefestigungen im südlichen Kleinasien. Der Fall Side,” in *Krise und Kult: Vörderer Orient und Nordafrika von Aurelian bis Justinian*, ed. D. Kreikenbom et al. (Berlin, 2010), 61–108, at 81–86; U. Lohner-Urban, “The

such a frieze of seven oval shields, one for each archangel (Fig. 9).⁴⁹ This detail on the Apostle ivory, which to my knowledge is not attested on any other Byzantine image of fortifications, would seem to confirm that the ivory does indeed attempt a true likeness of a specific gate rather than a generic representation.

The same may be true for the urban architecture visible above and behind the ivory’s gate (Fig. 10). The

Development and Function of the East Gate in Side, Pamphylia,” in Eisenberg and Khamisy, *Art of Siege Warfare*, 91–99.

49 The inscription, broken on the right side, is engraved on the corner pilaster of the theater’s northwest facade, and overlooks a gate of the city walls to the right, outside of and below the image in Fig. 9. See P. Niewöhner, “Archangels, Empty Ciboria, and the Defense of Late Antique Miletus: More Light from the Ancient East,” *JLA* 17.2 (2024): 298–329.



Fig. 9. Early Byzantine archangel inscription at the northwest corner of the theater and next to a gate of Miletus in western Asia Minor. Photo by the author, 2015.

center, behind the main gateway, is marked by a round, freestanding towering monument, the top of which has broken off. This is surrounded by a semicircular building with a tiled gable roof and two arched windows as well as an oculus on the left and a balcony on the right, which overlooks the fortifications. Beyond the semicircular building, straight gable roofs lead off to the right and left. A plan of all these architectural features would look remarkably like the Madaba mosaic image of Jerusalem's north gate, featuring the adjacent semicircular square with the central column and the colonnaded streets that lead off to the sides (Fig. 7). In particular,

the combination of gate, columnar monument, and surrounding semicircle, all on the same axis, is as specific as it is unusual, both in reality and in images, suggesting that the ivory was indeed informed by and meant to evoke the Gate of the Column in Jerusalem.

On the ivory, the columnar monument is depicted as built of masonry, as are all the other architectural features, and in keeping with the latest and most important monumental columns in Constantinople, those of Justinian I and of Heraclius's predecessor, Phocas (r. 602–610).⁵⁰ Justinian's column on the Augustaion, next to Hagia Sophia, should have been extra large in diameter, as it carried not just a simple statue, but an equestrian statue several times its natural size.⁵¹ Procopius describes this column's masonry of specially cut and angled stones and how they were held in place by brass bindings,⁵² some of which took the shape of wreaths and would have been similar to the early Byzantine wreath-shaped brass reinforcements of the column of Constantine the Great, also in Constantinople.⁵³ Procopius's description of Justinian's column implies that the masonry was always visible, although Pachymeres, in his late Byzantine *Ekphrasis of the Augustaion*, misunderstands the earlier author as referring to a complete brass sheathing and points out that in his own time the masonry could be seen, and he proceeds to describe it in even greater detail than Procopius, including alternating layers of bricks and marble.⁵⁴ As both descriptions

50 C. Mango, "The Columns of Justinian and His Successors," in C. Mango, *Studies on Constantinople* (Aldershot, 1993), X, at 3–8 (Justinian) and 14–17 (Phocas).

51 See the image and discussion by U. Gehn at laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk (record no. LSA-2463); E. N. Boeck, *The Bronze Horseman of Justinian in Constantinople: The Cross-Cultural Biography of a Mediterranean Monument* (Cambridge, 2021); A. Berger, *The Statues of Constantinople* (Cambridge, 2021), 15–17.

52 Procopius, *De aedificiis* 1, 2.1–4, in Procopius, *Opera omnia*, vol. 4, *Peri ktismatōn libri VI sive De aedificiis cum duobus indicibus*, ed. J. Haury and G. Wirth (Leipzig, 1964), 17. Translated in C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972), 110–11.

53 W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls: Byzantion, Konstantinupolis, Istanbul bis zum Beginn d. 17. Jh.* (Tübingen, 1977), 255–57; S. Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge, 2004), 200–204; laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk (LSA-2457); R. Ousterhout, "The Life and Afterlife of Constantine's Column," *JRA* 27 (2014): 304–26.

54 *Rhetores graeci*, ed. C. Walz, 9 vols. in 10 (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1832–1936; repr. Osnabrück, 1968), 1:579–83. Translated in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 111–13. On the relation to Procopius's



Fig. 10. Apostle ivory at the Louvre as seen from above. Photo by Jean-Gilles Berizzi, 2002; courtesy of the Musée du Louvre.

elaborate on the masonry, it makes sense that the ivory carver did the same when depicting a similar kind of column in Jerusalem.⁵⁵

De aedificiis, see. M. Ritter, “The Byzantine Afterlife of Procopius’s *Buildings*,” *DOP* 75 (2021): 143–70, at 160–62.

⁵⁵ This does not necessarily mean that the Jerusalem column was in fact built of masonry. The ivory carver may simply have depicted it so because he did not know any better, and because in his experience the latest and most important of such columns had been built of masonry and were praised for the quality of the stonework. The Arabic term *‘amūd* for the column is nonspecific and may designate either a monolithic or a masonry-built column; see *EP* 1:457–59, s.v. “*‘Amūd*” (G. Marçais). The image on the Madaba mosaic map has a stepped sockle and base, like many monolithic columns (M. Jordan-Ruwe, *Das Säulenmonument: Zur Geschichte der erhöhten Aufstellung antiker Porträtstatuen* [Bonn, 1995]), but also like Justinian’s masonry-built column as described by Procopius and Pachymeres (above, nn. 52

The Apostle

The “Apostle” on the eponymous ivory is distinguished in various ways: by his central position and size, by sitting on a cushioned throne, by a nimbus, and by an ancient mantle, a himation or pallium, that he appears to wear over a tunic. In Byzantine iconography, such ancient garments distinguished biblical figures and martyrs from more recent personages who lived after the end of persecution and were shown in contemporary dress.⁵⁶

and 54), so the available evidence as to the real nature of the column in Jerusalem seems to be inconclusive.

⁵⁶ H. Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1996), makes this point for the later Byzantine periods, and it applies to early Byzantine iconography too;

In the case of Jerusalem, the obvious saintly representative of the city from biblical times is James the Just, the first bishop of Jerusalem, who was identified with the homonymous brother of the Lord and sometimes—in the West, always—with James the Less and James the son of Alphaeus.⁵⁷ James the Just was depicted alternatively as a bishop with liturgical vestments or as an apostle with ancient garments and always with full beard.⁵⁸

In Constantinople, James the Just was known from and venerated at a chapel that Justin II (r. 565–578) had built in a central location next to St. Mary of Chalkoprateia in order to house James's relics.⁵⁹ According to Eusebius, James died a martyr when he was hit on the head by a fuller with his club.⁶⁰ Thus, the large and conspicuous bump on the ivory apostle's forehead could identify him as James the Just. Both he and James the Less, who was martyred in the same way, can be depicted with a fuller's club.⁶¹ Byzantine images of James the Just

are rare, but narrative illustrations of his martyrdom in the Constantinopolitan Menologion of Basil II (r. 976–1025) and in the Byzantine-style south vault mosaics of San Marco in Venice (twelfth century) show the martyr being hit where on the ivory he has the bump.⁶²

El Greco, i.e., Dominikos Theotokopoulos (ca. 1541–1614), who was born into a Greek family on Crete and trained in the Byzantine painting tradition there,⁶³ was later repeatedly commissioned to paint a series of apostles according to Spanish tradition, always including an image of James the Just/Less. Irritatingly, El Greco sometimes failed to distinguish James by his attribute, the fuller's club; this omission caused confusion because El Greco's apostles tend to look alike, with similar dress and a generic kind of (fore)head, and James could thus be identified only by elimination.⁶⁴ However, even without a club, El Greco's James the Just/Less is recognizable due to what appears to have been Byzantine tradition, that is, a bump or hole on his otherwise generic (fore)head (Fig. 11).⁶⁵

In addition to identifying the saint, the bump could have also derived meaning by reminding the viewer that James had died a violent death. According to Eusebius and his early Christian sources, James was martyred by Jews because he had led their congregation

see P. Niewöhner, "A Hidden Agenda of Imperial Appropriation and Power Play? Iconological Considerations Concerning Apse Images and Their Role in the Iconoclast Controversy," *Millennium* 18 (2021): 251–70, at 258–64.

57 W. Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus und die Jakobustradition* (Göttingen, 1987); *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 47 vols. (Herzberg, 1970–2024), 14:1109–11, s.v. "Jakobus, Sohn des Alphäus" (D. Gewalt); M. Myllykoski, "James the Just in History and Tradition: Perspectives of Past and Present Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5.1 (2006): 73–122, 6.1 (2007): 11–98; R. Deines, *Jakobus: Im Schatten des Größeren*, Biblische Gestalten 30 (Leipzig, 2017).

58 *LChrI* 7:39–41, figs. 1–2, s.v. "Jakobus Bruder des Herren (Adelphotheos), der Gerechte" (B. Böhm). See also P. Bokotopulos, *Βυζαντινές εικόνες* (Athens, 1995), 94, no. 73 (Patmos); E. T. Kostić, "The Icon of the Twelve Apostles of the Pushkin Museum: Unknown Aspects of a Well-Known Work of Art," *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art* 13 (2023): 299–306, 880–84.

59 C. Hennessy, "Saint James the Just: Sacral Topography in Jerusalem and Constantinople," in *Tomb and Temple: Re-Imagining the Sacred Buildings of Jerusalem*, ed. R. Griffith-Jones and E. Fernie (Woodbridge, UK, 2018), 194–210.

60 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 2, *Books 6–10*, trans. J. E. L. Oulton, Loeb 265 (Cambridge, MA, 1932), 23.10–18. See J. Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia, SC, 1997), 105–58; C. Antonelli, "The Death of James the Just According to Hegesippus (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.10–18): Narrative Construction, Biblical *Testimonia*, and Comparison with the Other Known Traditions," in *From Jesus to Christian Origins: Second Annual Meeting of Bertinoro (1–4 October, 2015)*, ed. A. Destro and M. Pesce, *Judaïsme ancien et origines du christianisme* 16 (Turnhout, 2019), 373–401.

61 *LChrI* 7:48–51, s.v. "Jakobus Minor (der Jüngere), Alpäus" (B. Böhm).

62 Vat. gr. 1613, p. 131, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613. Cf. F. D'Aiuto, ed., *El "Menologio de Basilio II", Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1613: Libro de estudios con ocasión de la edición facsimil* (Madrid, 2008). For the mosaic in San Marco, see O. Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*, vol. 1, *The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Chicago, 1984), 222–23, color pl. 8, b-w pl. 357 (south aisle vault, eastern half, upper tier), and further on their Byzantine origins, L. James, "Mosaic Matters: Questions of Manufacturing and Mosaicists in the Mosaics of San Marco, Venice," in *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, ed. H. Maguire and R. S. Nelson (Washington, DC, 2010), 227–44.

63 M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, ed., *From Byzantium to El Greco: Greek Frescoes and Icons*, trans. D. A. Hardy (Athens, 1987); M. Cortés Arrese, "Las raíces bizantinas de El Greco," *Erytheia* 35 (2014): 31–57.

64 H. E. Wethey, *El Greco and His School*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1962), 2:100, 103–4, no. 163, fig. 213 (Toledo Cathedral, no club), 105, no. 177, fig. 224 (Museo de El Greco, Toledo, no club).

65 J. Camón Aznar, *Dominico Greco*, 2nd ed. (Madrid, 1970), no. 317, fig. 879 (Museo de El Greco, Toledo, no club, see Fig. 11 of this article), no. 333, fig. 880 (Fine Arts Museum of Asturias, with club), no. 294, fig. 878 (Toledo Cathedral, no club), no. 353, fig. 881 (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, accession no. 9048, no club), no. 345, fig. 884 (The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, NY, accession no. 1971.18, no club).

Fig. 11.
El Greco, James the Just/
Less, Museo del Greco,
Toledo, inv. CE00012.
Photo by Rebeca García
Merino; courtesy of the
Museo del Greco,
<http://ceres.mcu.es>.



astray, similarly to and in the tradition of Jesus.⁶⁶ Later, James's bump could have resonated with Heraclius and his contemporaries on account of events after the Persians conquered Palestine in 614. The Persians established what was perceived as Jewish rule of Jerusalem, and when the Christians revolted, took over the city, and started a pogrom, Persian troops moved in and quashed the uprising by force.⁶⁷ This is described as a massacre and appears to have resulted in several mass

graves in the vicinity of Jerusalem.⁶⁸ One Christian mass grave in a cave by the pool of Mamilla/Maqella has been excavated and found to date from the period in question; it contained predominantly young bodies that differ epigenetically from contemporary Jewish and Arab remains and would therefore seem to represent Jerusalem's Byzantine population.⁶⁹ The fall and

⁶⁶ See n. 60.

⁶⁷ J. Howard-Johnston, "Jerusalem in 630," in *City of Caesar, City of God: Constantinople and Jerusalem in Late Antiquity*, ed. K. M. Klein and J. Wienand, Millennium-Studien 97 (Berlin, 2022), 281–94.

⁶⁸ G. Avni, "The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 C.E.): An Archaeological Assessment," *BASOR* 357 (2010): 35–48, at 36–40.

⁶⁹ R. Reich, "'God Knows Their Names': Mass Christian Grave Revealed in Jerusalem," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22.2 (1996): 26–33; Y. Nagar et al., "What Can We Make of These Fragments? Excavation at 'Mamilla' Cave, Byzantine Period, Jerusalem," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 9 (1999): 29–38; H. M. Cotton et al., eds., *Corpus inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae: A Multi-Lingual Corpus of the*

sack of Jerusalem was widely publicized in Byzantium; the mass grave of Mamilla/Maqella was reportedly shown to Heraclius, and everything was blamed on the Jews.⁷⁰ In this context, James, as an earlier martyr of violent Jewish persecution, could have been identified as an appropriate representative of Christian Jerusalem as Heraclius came to its rescue.

Iconology

The Apostle ivory's overall composition appears to evoke two different iconographies: imperial *synantesis* on the one hand and Christian imagery on the other. *Synantesis* was the initial part of an *adventus* and required that urban representatives welcomed the arriving emperor outside of the city.⁷¹ Their meeting was accompanied by rejoicing citizens and an atmosphere of festive triumph that on the ivory is provided by the people who watch the proceedings from various windows and balconies. A similarly crowded cityscape

above and behind a gate is depicted as part of the *adventus* scene on the Troyes casket (Fig. 6).⁷²

When Heraclius arrived at Jerusalem, the acting patriarch, Modestus, participated in the ceremony, as the patriarch of Constantinople did upon the emperor's return to the capital.⁷³ Religious overtones were common on such occasions—for example, John Tzimiskes was accompanied by an icon of the Virgin and child, which the Madrid Skylitzes depicts resting on a carriage at the head of the emperor's triumphal procession into the city of Constantinople (Fig. 12).⁷⁴ Originally, the carriage had been intended for the emperor, but Tzimiskes declined in an act of modesty, as Skylitzes points out, and instead had the icon placed on the carriage and precede him in the position of greatest honor.⁷⁵

That icon was a prize of war that the emperor brought back from his victorious campaign; it was well suited to a triumphal entry into Constantinople,⁷⁶ where the Virgin's icon would have resonated with the populace as she and her relics were venerated in multiple shrines and paraded in the streets on numerous occasions every year.⁷⁷ Similarly, James the Just would have been chosen for display on the Apostle ivory because he was the first and most prominent bishop of Jerusalem and thus an obvious representative of that city. In addition, James may have presented the True Cross, Jerusalem's most important relic, which Heraclius returned as a spoil of his war against the Persians (see below). However, instead of riding triumphantly on horseback, in keeping with the convention of an imperial *synantesis/adventus*—as depicted, for example, on

Inscriptions from Alexander to Muhammad, vol. 1.2, *Jerusalem: 705–1120* (Berlin, 2012), 245–46, no. 869.

70 Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien*, 1:chap. 30, §271. De Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:328 (AM 6120), Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 458–59 (AM 6120) on Heraclius turning against Jews in Jerusalem. Other contemporary sources, including Jewish ones, confirm that Christians held Jews responsible for the Persian occupation; see S. Leder, "The Attitude of the Population, Especially the Jews, towards the Arab-Islamic Conquest of Bilād al-Shām and the Question of Their Role Therein," *Die Welt des Orients* 18 (1987): 64–71; G. Dagron and V. Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e siècle," *TM* 11 (1991): 17–273, at 30–38, repr. in G. Dagron and V. Déroche, *Juifs et chrétiens en Orient byzantin*, Bilans de recherche 5 (Paris, 2010), 17–273; D. M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994), 82–92; W. J. van Bakkum, "Jewish Messianic Expectations in the Age of Heraclius," in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 95–112.

71 J. Lehen, *Adventus principis: Untersuchungen zu Sinngehalt und Zeremoniell der Kaiserankunft in den Städten des Imperium Romanum*, Prismata: Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 7 (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 128–55; M. Nicheanian, "L'adventus médiéval à Constantinople: Continuité romaine et rupture sociale aux VII^e–IX^e siècles," in *Les entrées royales et impériales: Histoire, représentation et diffusion d'une cérémonie publique, de l'orient ancien à Byzance*, ed. A. Bérenger and E. Perrin-Saminadayar (Paris, 2009), 187–98; J. A. Latham, "Adventus, Occursus, and the Christianization of Rome," in *Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Held in Oxford 2015*, ed. M. Vinzent, *Studia patristica* 92 (Leuven, 2017), 397–409.

72 See n. 16.

73 See nn. 33–34.

74 Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Vit. 26–2, fol. 172v. See p. 354 of the facsimile at the Library of Congress, "History of Byzantium," <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667859/>. Cf. V. Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes* (Leiden, 2002), 210–11, fig. 433.

75 *Synopsis historiarum*, 310.51–62.

76 A different aspect of the same *adventus* appears to be depicted on the Gunthertuch (see n. 23).

77 P. Speck, "The Virgin's Help for Constantinople," *BMGS* 27 (2003): 266–71; B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006); M. B. Cunningham, "Mary as Intercessor in Constantinople during the Iconoclast Period: The Textual Evidence," in *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century)*, ed. L. M. Peltomaa et al. (Vienna, 2015), 139–52.



Fig. 12. Madrid Skylitzes, Vitr. 26–2, detail of fol. 172v. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tzimiskes_returns.jpg.

the Kerch plate, the Barberini ivory, the Troyes casket (Fig. 6), the Gunthertuch, and the Madrid Skylitzes (Fig. 12)—Heraclius stands to the side and bows his head, which makes him look like a humble courtier at the throne of the seated apostle.

The seated figure of James at the head of a congregation in front of Jerusalem evokes images of Christ enthroned in heavenly Jerusalem, most famously the fifth-century apse mosaic of Santa Pudenziana in Rome,⁷⁸ or in front of city gates as on the so-called city-gate sarcophagi,⁷⁹ always surrounded by apostles. James's monumentality, ancient dress, and frontal posture, in combination with Heraclius's smaller scale, contemporary garments, and sidewise stance, are reminiscent of apse and other Christian images with comparable arrangements of and distinctions between biblical saints and contemporary people, as depicted, for example, on the sixth-century mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna, in Eufrasius's basilica in Poreč,

or on the later mosaic lunette in the narthex of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.⁸⁰

On the Apostle ivory, the combination of imperial synantesis and Christian imagery resulted in ambivalence: On the one hand, the humble portrayal of Heraclius, who is standing, bowing his head, and yielding pride of place to the enthroned saint, appears to be at odds with the tradition of Roman triumphalism, which required the victorious emperor to proudly ride into the city on a tall horse. On the other hand, James's apostolic participation in the emperor's reception implies that heaven acknowledges Heraclius, who holds the position of honor to the saint's right.

Historical Context and Intended Message

The Apostle ivory is not alone in referencing Heraclius's humility as he returned the True Cross to Jerusalem. A door lintel of an Armenian church in eastern

78 M. Braconi, *Il mosaico del catino absidale di S. Pudenziana: La storia, i restauri, le interpretazioni* (Todi, Italy, 2016); L. James, *Mosaics in the Medieval World: From Late Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2017), 171–72.

79 G. Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage* (Munich, 2000), 304–7; F. Bisconti, "I sarcofagi a 'porte di città': Prototipi antichi ed esiti paleocristiani," in *Medioevo: La chiesa e il palazzo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi* (Parma, 20–24 settembre 2005), ed. A. C. Quintavalle (Milan, 2007), 456–67.

80 Cf. n. 56, and see I. Andreescu-Treadgold and W. Treadgold, "Procopius and the Imperial Panels of S. Vitale," *ArtB* 79 (1997): 708–23; A. Terry and H. Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 2007); James, *Mosaics in the Medieval World*, 237–40 (San Vitale), 243–44 (Eufrasius), 317–23 (Hagia Sophia); A. Walker, "The Emperor at the Threshold: Making and Breaking Taxis at Hagia Sophia," in *The Emperor in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Forty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Tougher (New York, 2019), 281–321.

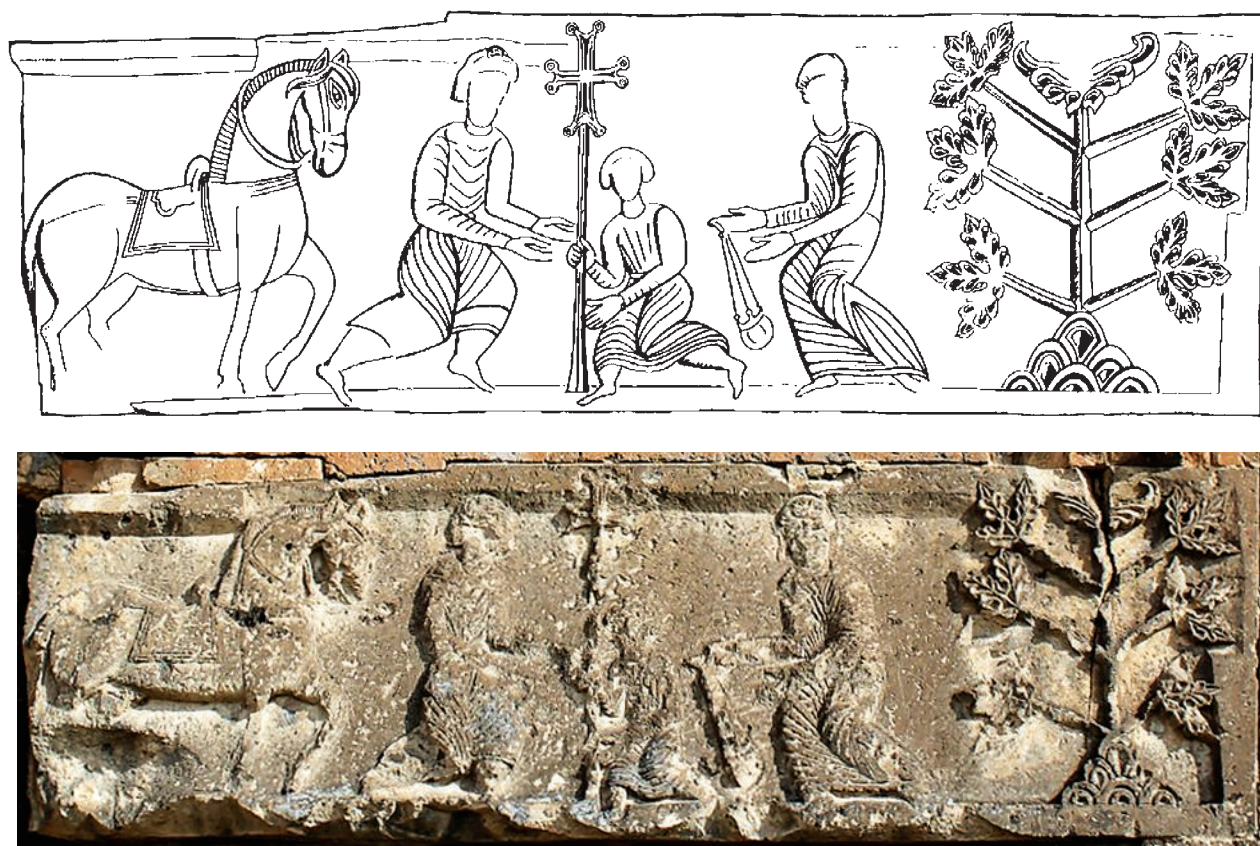


Fig. 13. Line drawing (*top*) and photograph (*bottom*) of the exaltation of the cross on a door lintel of the Armenian cathedral of Mren in the vicinity of Kars in eastern Anatolia. Drawing from J.-M. Thierry and N. Thierry, “La cathédrale de Mrèn et sa décoration,” *CahArch* 21 (1971): 43–77, at 70, fig. 29; photo by Richard Allan Elbrecht, http://www.virtualani.org/mren/img_4487b.jpg.

Anatolia that was built during Heraclius’s reign and names the “victorious” emperor in a building inscription is carved with a relief image of the exaltation of the cross that appears to be offered or acclaimed by Heraclius, who has dismounted his horse (Fig. 13).⁸¹ The inclusion of the horse in the otherwise minimalistic iconography seems to point to the emperor’s humility in dismounting. Latin accounts of the event, which were widespread and popular in Western Christendom and probably reflect an earlier Eastern tradition from

before Heraclius’s monothelitism was declared heresy at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 681,⁸² tell the same story differently and also include an element of heavenly acknowledgment: As Heraclius approached Jerusalem, the gates were miraculously blocked until the emperor dismounted and carried the True Cross on foot.⁸³ The

81 J.-M. Thierry and N. Thierry, “La cathédrale de Mrèn et sa décoration,” *CahArch* 21 (1971): 43–77, at 69–75; C. Maranci, “The Humble Heraclius: Revisiting the North Portal at Mren,” *REArm* 31 (2008–9): 167–80. Cf. Z. Hakobyan, “The Restitution of the True Cross in the 10th-Century Armenian Sources and Its Depiction in the Early Medieval Sculpture,” *REArm* 35 (2013): 237–50.

82 A. Sirotenko, “Forgetting the Heretic: The Emperor Heraclius in the Byzantine Liturgical Tradition,” *JÖB* 67 (2017): 239–47.

83 Borgehammar, “Heraclius Learns Humility.” For more detail on the complex Western reception of the story, see A. Sommerlechner, “Kaiser Herakleios und die Rückkehr des Heiligen Kreuzes nach Jerusalem: Überlegungen zu Stoff- und Motivgeschichte,” *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 45 (2003): 319–60; B. Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, trans. L. Preedy (Leiden, 2004); B. Baert, “Héraclius, l’Exaltation de la Croix et le Mont-Saint-Michel au XI^e s.: Une lecture attentive du

Latin accounts present this not as humiliating punishment for imperial haughtiness, but as an ultimate heavenly test and approval of Heraclius's Christian mores and achievements in the sense of Luke 14:11: "He who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Apostle ivory may be understood along some of the same lines. It seems inconceivable that a Byzantine workshop produced anything that was not praiseful of the emperor, and the trade-off of imperial humility for divine authorization accords with the emperor's pious image as painted by George of Pisidia⁸⁴ as well as Heraclius's actions at the time,⁸⁵ including the adoption of the novel title πιστὸς ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεὺς (emperor, faithful in Christ) in 629.⁸⁶ The emperor was then engaged in uniting various Christian factions in order to increase the cohesion of the crumbling empire, for example, through consultation with the miaphysite patriarch of Antioch, Anastasios the Camel Driver, whom Heraclius had met on his way from Jerusalem to Constantinople,⁸⁷ whereby divine authorization would have stood him in good stead. The Apostle ivory thus emerges as an ideological statement in the aftermath of Heraclius's victorious Persian campaign and the return of the True Cross.

ms. 641 de la Pierpont Morgan Library à New York," *CabCM* 51 (2008): 3–20.

84 M. Whitby, "Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and His Deputies," in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. M. Whitby (Leiden, 1998), 247–73, at 252–55.

85 Drijvers, "Heraclius and the *Restitutio Crucis*"; M. Meier, "Herakles – Herakleios – Christus: Georgios Pisides und der *kosmohýstes*," in *Antike Mythologie in christlichen Kontexten der Spätantike*, ed. H. Leppin, Millennium-Studien 54 (Berlin, 2015), 167–92; Viermann, *Herakleios, der schwitzende Kaiser*, 261–300; T. Raum, *Szenen eines Überlebenskampfes: Akteure und Handlungsspielräume im Imperium Romanum 610–630*, Roma Aeterna 9 (Stuttgart, 2021), 199–217; P. Sykopolitrou, "Mobility in Seventh-Century Byzantium: Analysing Emperor Heraclius' Political Ideology and Propaganda," *Early Medieval Europe* 31 (2023): 405–29, at 419–24.

86 O. Kresten, "Herakleios und der Titel βασιλεὺς," in *Varia* 7 (= *Poikila Byzantina* 18) (Bonn, 2000), 178–79; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453*, vol. 1.1, *Regesten von 565–867*, 2nd exp. ed. (Munich, 2009), no. 199; C. Zuckerman, "On the Titles and Office of the Byzantine ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ," *TM* 16 (2010): 865–90.

87 Zuckerman, "Heraclius and the Return of the Holy Cross," 212.

The True Cross

The return of the True Cross was the most important Christian achievement by Heraclius that can explain both his visit to Jerusalem and why that should be depicted on the Apostle ivory, so why is the True Cross not seen there? Two possible explanations come to mind: First, the Apostle ivory could have been part of a larger ensemble, where the True Cross was depicted on a different ivory that would have formed the centerpiece of the pictorial narrative; in this case, an image of Heraclius's military triumph over the Persians, for example, could have contrasted with his humble stance next to James the Just, thereby highlighting both Heraclius's virility as well as his humility and thus completing his characterization,⁸⁸ but this might have depended on where and to whom the ivories were to be displayed. Compare the complex portrayal of ideal rulership on the nine contemporary David plates, ranging from playing the harp via humble anointment to victorious fights against beast and man.⁸⁹

Thus, the Apostle ivory may conceivably have belonged to a piece of ceremonious furniture, like the mid-sixth-century ivory throne of archbishop Maximian in Ravenna, which consists of several large panels as well as numerous smaller ivories, including some that depict the life of Christ as well as that of Joseph from the Old Testament.⁹⁰ The throne was likely made by the same

88 Cf. George of Pisidia's complex characterization of Heraclius in M. Whitby, "George of Pisidia's Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius and His Campaigns: Variety and Development," in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 157–74.

89 G. Noga-Banai, "Early Byzantine Elite Style: The David Plates and Related Works," *Boreas* 25 (2002): 225–37; R. E. Leader, "The David Plates Revisited: Transforming the Secular in Early Byzantium," *ArtB* 82.3 (2000): 407–27; V. Tsamakda, "König David als Typus des byzantinischen Kaisers," in *Byzanz: Das Römerreich im Mittelalter*, vol. 1, *Welt der Ideen, Welt der Dinge*, ed. F. Daim and J. Drauschke (Mainz, 2010), 23–54, at 30–31, figs. 4–5.

90 G. Bovini, *La cattedra eburnea del vescovo Massimiano di Ravenna*, rev. repr. (Ravenna, 1990); R. Farioli Campanati, "Per la datazione della cattedra di Massimiano e dell'ambone di Agnello," in *Studi in memoria di Patrizia Angiolini Martinelli*, ed. S. Pasi, Studi e scavi 10 (Bologna, 2005), 165–68; C. Rizzardi, "Massimiano a Ravenna: La cattedra eburnea del Museo Arcivescovile alla luce di nuove ricerche," in *Ideologia e cultura artistica tra Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale (IV–X secolo): Il ruolo dell'autorità ecclesiastica alla luce di nuovi scavi e ricerche. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Bologna–Ravenna, 26–29 Novembre 2007*, ed. R. Farioli Campanati et al. (Bologna, 2009), 229–43.

workshop that also produced the Barberini ivory, with a triumphant emperor on horseback,⁹¹ and the Apostle ivory could have made sense in either context, church or state, like the David plates, which cannot be attributed with any degree of certainty either. The high relief and protruding carving of the Apostle ivory would in any case have required a location that was not exposed to too much wear and tear, that is, not on the central backrest of a throne, but conceivably on a side or back part of some such piece of furniture.

Second, instead of being part of a larger ensemble, the Apostle ivory could have stood alone if the True Cross had been depicted in the center of the ivory itself, in the hands of James the Just. James could once have held and presented the relic of the True Cross in the same way as Archbishop Maximian or various saints grip hand crosses in the mid-sixth-century mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna or on numerous tenth-century ivory triptychs from Constantinople.⁹² James's ivory hands as well as his codex have been restored, appear too large, and make no sense, as there is nobody for the saint to greet or acclaim (Fig. 2). However, the oversized restoration indicates a large fracture and gap where James may once have held and presented the relic of the True Cross, not unlike the seated clerics on the Trier ivory, who hold a box-shaped reliquary.⁹³

The True Cross was reportedly contained in a locked box,⁹⁴ which brings to mind the Constantinopolitan staurotheke at Limburg, a lockable container for relics of the True Cross from the middle Byzantine period.⁹⁵ In Jerusalem, the locked box played an important role because it enabled the acting patriarch, Modestus, to prove the originality and integrity

of the relic by producing the key, which had remained in the city, and unlocking the intact reliquary for the first time since its removal by the Persians. In doing so, Modestus confirmed Heraclius's achievement and countered stories of earlier Persian abuse, according to which the originality and integrity of the relic appeared doubtful.⁹⁶ The later Latin accounts seem to make this same point when admitting the emperor only upon humble presentation of the True Cross, which is thus validated as the original relic. The need to authenticate the relic appears to have been an important reason for Heraclius's humility in Jerusalem. On the Apostle ivory, James could have replaced Modestus in the authentication of the True Cross as well as in the reception of the emperor outside of the city: If James had held and presented the relic, either in the shape of a cross or within a container, he would have been seen as accepting and endorsing it as true, thereby providing the ultimate approval of Heraclius's accomplishment.

The Depiction of Imperial Humility

Independently of its context and restoration, the Apostle ivory appears to mark a step in the development of Byzantine imperial iconography insofar as it illustrates imperial humility in a way that earlier images did not but that became more common subsequently. Earlier depictions would typically invite comparisons of the emperor's rule on earth with that of Christ in heaven. For example, at the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, where Justinian I's central position among his retinue on the sanctuary's north wall is mirrored by Christ's heavenly court in the conch of the apse, including similar colors of dress for the earthly and for the heavenly ruler.⁹⁷ On the Barberini ivory, the emperor and Christ are positioned on the same central axis, one below the other, the earthly ruler honored by three winged personifications of victory from right, left, and below, while Christ in heaven is likewise accompanied by two winged angels on his right and left.⁹⁸

In contrast, later images often depict the emperor in direct interaction with heavenly powers, as shown, for example, by his *proskynesis*, or prostration, in front of

91 See n. 22.

92 For Maximian at San Vitale in Ravenna, see n. 80; for the tenth-century ivory triptychs from Constantinople, see A. Eastmond, "The Heavenly Court: Courtly Ceremony, and the Great Byzantine Ivory Triptychs of the Tenth Century," *DOP* 69 (2015): 71–114.

93 See n. 113.

94 *La prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614*, ed. G. Garitte, CSCO 202–203 = *Scriptores Iberici* 11–12, 2 vols. in 1 (Louvain, 1960), 2:55 (XXIV.9); Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, ed. and trans. C. Mango, CFHB 13 (Washington, DC, 1990), 66–67, chap. 18.

95 H. A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Wiesbaden, 2004), 105–12; C. J. Sprecher, *Emperor and God: Passion Relics and the Divinisation of Byzantine Rulers, 944–1204* (Heidelberg, 2024), 75–124.

96 See n. 94 and Klein, *Byzanz*, 28–30; Zuckerman, "Heraclius and the Return of the Holy Cross," 216–18.

97 See n. 80.

98 See n. 22.

Christ in the narthex of Hagia Sophia,⁹⁹ by Constantine and Justinian I flanking the Virgin and child in the southwest vestibule of the same church,¹⁰⁰ or by numerous coronation scenes on coins and ivories and in illuminated manuscripts.¹⁰¹ Direct interaction normally required some degree of humility on the part of the emperor, such as by yielding the central or higher position to the heavenly power, by adopting a sideward stance, or by acclamation through prostration, bowed head, or raised hand. In return, the emperor received heavenly acknowledgment of his power as God's representative on earth. This had been the emperor's function ever since Constantine the Great, as Byzantine emperors selected the patriarchs, convened councils, and ruled the church,¹⁰² which sometimes included ostentatious piety and humility,¹⁰³ but the way that this was expressed in images changed from the early to the middle Byzantine period.¹⁰⁴

99 See n. 80, and Z. A. Gavrilović, "The Humiliation of Leo VI the Wise (the Mosaic of the Narthex at Saint Sophia, Istanbul)," *CahArch* 28 (1979): 87–94.

100 James, *Mosaics in the Medieval World*, 325–26.

101 C. Jolivet-Lévy, "L'image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin à l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne (867–1056)," *Byzantion* 57 (1987): 441–70; V. Maladakis, "The Coronation of the Emperor on Middle Byzantine Coinage: A Case of Christian Political Theology (10th–Mid 11th C.)," *Acta Musei Varnaensis* 7.1 (2008): 342–60.

102 G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le "césaropapisme" byzantin* (Paris, 1996); C. Rapp, "Imperial Ideology in the Making: Eusebius of Caesarea on Constantine as 'Bishop,'" *JTS* n.s. 49 (1998): 685–95; H. Leppin, *Justinian: Das christliche Experiment* (Stuttgart, 2011). For some qualifications, see A. Angelov, "In Search of God's Only Emperor: Basilus in Byzantine and Modern Historiography," *JMedHist* 40.2 (2014): 123–41.

103 M. Meier, "Die Demut des Kaisers: Aspekte der religiösen Selbstinszenierung bei Theodosius II. (408–450 n. Chr.)," in *Die Bibel als politisches Argument: Voraussetzungen und Folgen biblistischer Herrschaftslegitimation in der Vormoderne*, ed. A. Pečar and K. Trampedach (Munich, 2007), 135–58; S. Diefenbach, "Zur Dynamik kaiserlicher Siegesrituale in der Spätantike: Konstantinopel und Rom im Vergleich," in Conrad et al., *Säkulare Prozessionen*, 63–110.

104 A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin: Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'Orient* (Paris, 1936), 100–106, 172–77, 263–67; *RBK* 3:722–853, s.v. "Kaiserbild" (K. Wessel); J. G. Deckers, "Der erste Diener Christi: Die Proskynese der Kaiser als Schlüsselmotiv der Mosaiken in S. Vitale (Ravenna) und in der Hagia Sophia (Istanbul)," in *Art, cérémonial et liturgie au Moyen Âge: Actes du Colloque de 3e Cycle Romand de Lettres, Lausanne-Fribourg, 24–25 mars, 14–15 avril, 12–13 mai 2000*, ed. N. Bock et al. (Rome, 2002), 11–70; J.-M. Spieser, "Le Christ et le pouvoir impérial à Byzance," in *Cristo e il potere: Teologia, antropologia e politica*, ed. L. Andreani and A. Paravicini Bagliani (Florence, 2017), 17–31; M. Studer-Karlen, "The Emperor's Image in Byzantium: Perceptions and Functions,"

Thus, Heraclius's humble behavior in Jerusalem may, for example, be compared to Theodosius II's (r. 408–450) barefoot walk through Constantinople on 26 January 447, when that emperor displayed penitence in response to heavenly wrath in the form of an earthquake.¹⁰⁵ Theodosius II's humility is not known to have informed imperial iconography, but it inspired a series of annual processions that commemorated the event every 26 January for centuries, as attested by the middle Byzantine typicon of Hagia Sophia,¹⁰⁶ and may have led to the death of Theodosius's successor Marcian (r. 450–457), who likely overexercised his ailing feet on the occasion.¹⁰⁷ Heraclius's humility appears to have caused a similar stir, as reflected by the Apostle ivory, the contemporary Armenian door lintel (see above, Fig. 13), and the later Latin accounts, and in this case, too, the event could be said to have caused ripples well into the middle Byzantine period, insofar as the ivory's focus on imperial humility became widespread over the course of the centuries. Heraclius is a probable candidate for innovation, as he was at the height of his power, having beaten the Persians and returned the True Cross, and also established other novelties as, for example, the new title of βασιλεύς as well as the novel coin image with long beard and giant moustache.¹⁰⁸

The bump on the forehead of James the Just would seem to have been novel as well, insofar as it showed and referenced bodily harm. While saints' lives abound

in *Meanings and Functions of the Ruler's Image in the Mediterranean World (11th–15th Centuries)*, ed. M. Bacci et al. (Leiden, 2022), 134–71. Cf. E. Chrysaphi, *Οι άγγελοι ως μέλη της Ουράνιας Αυλής στην τέχνη της πρώιμης και μέσης βυζαντινής περιόδου*, Byzantina Mnēmeia 19 (Thessaloniki, 2024), who argues that archangels started to be depicted in imperial dress from the middle Byzantine period onward because they followed the example of the emperor, who was now represented as a member of the heavenly court.

105 C. Kelly, "Stooping to Conquer: The Power of Imperial Humility," in *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity*, ed. C. Kelly (New York, 2013), 221–43.

106 J. Mateos, ed. and trans., *Le Typicon de la Grande Église: Ms. Saint-Croix n° 40, X^e siècle*, vol. 1, *Le cycle des douze mois*, OCA 165 (Rome, 1962), 212.1–14.

107 B. Croke, "The Date and Circumstances of Marcian's Decease, A.D. 457," *Byzantion* 48 (1978): 5–9.

108 See nn. 29 and 86, as well as J. F. Haldon, "The Reign of Heraclius: A Context for Change?," in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 1–16; M. Meier, "Der Monarch auf der Suche nach seinem Platz: Kaiserherrschaft im frühen Byzanz (5. bis 7. Jahrhundert n. Chr.)," in *Monarchische Herrschaft im Altertum*, ed. S. R. Rebenich (Berlin, 2017), 509–44, at 538–43.

with graphic descriptions of physical injury in the early Byzantine period,¹⁰⁹ their depiction was initially characterized by restraint and reserve.¹¹⁰ A more explicit iconography as well as uninhibited scenes of violence, pain, grief, and sorrow are attested from the middle Byzantine period onward,¹¹¹ and the Apostle ivory would seem to be an early example at the beginning of this development.

On a different level, the Apostle ivory appears innovative also insofar as it replaced the earlier tradition of consular and imperial diptychs with a new genre of ivories dedicated primarily to Christian achievement rather than to secular office.¹¹² In this the Apostle ivory was followed by the Trier ivory, which celebrates Empress Irene for the restoration of the church of St. Euphemia in Constantinople and the return of the saint's relics in 796, as well as for the image of Christ on the Chalke palace gate.¹¹³ Other examples include

109 J. Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (New York, 1995); L. S. Cobb, *Divine Deliverance: Pain and Painlessness in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (Oakland, CA, 2017).

110 F. Harley-McGowan, "From Victim to Victor: Developing an Iconography of Suffering in Early Christian Art," in *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in Its Imperial Context*, ed. L. M. Jefferson and R. M. Jensen (Minneapolis, 2015), 115–58.

111 H. Maguire, "The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art," *DOP* 31 (1977): 123–74; repr. in H. Maguire, *Image and Imagination in Byzantine Art*, Variorum Collected Studies 866 (Aldershot, 2007), VI; G. Tirnanić, "A Touch of Violence: Feeling Pain, Perceiving Pain in Byzantium," in *Knowing Bodies, Passionate Souls: Sense Perception in Byzantium*, ed. S. Ashbrook Harvey and M. Mullett (Washington, DC, 2017), 223–38, at 225–30 on depictions of lashing/flogging; G. Tirnanić, "Image in Pain: Icons, Old Bones, and New Blood," in *Beholding Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Terry-Fritsch and E. F. Labbie (Farnham, UK, 2012), 125–42; H. Maguire, "Grief and Joy in Byzantine Art," in *Managing Emotion in Byzantium: Passions, Affects, and Imaginings*, ed. M. Mullett and S. Ashbrook Harvey (New York, 2023), 314–46.

112 On consular ivories, see R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte 2 (Berlin, 1929); A. Eastmond, "Consular Diptychs, Rhetoric and the Languages of Art in Sixth-Century Constantinople," *AH* 33 (2010): 742–65; A. Cameron, "The Origin, Context and Function of Consular Diptychs," *JRS* 103 (2013): 174–207; M. Cristini, "Eburnei nuntii: I dititici consolari e la diplomazia imperiale del VI secolo," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 68 (2019): 489–520.

113 P. Niewöhner, "The Significance of the Cross before, during, and after Iconoclasm: Early Christian Aniconism in Constantinople and Asia Minor," *DOP* 74 (2020): 185–242, at 224–27, including reference to diverse earlier bibliography, some of which has also been summarized by L. Milanović, "Delivering the Sacred: Representing *Translatio* on the Trier Ivory," in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred*

Leo's comb, which shows the emperor being crowned by the Virgin in an architectural setting reminiscent of a church like Hagia Sophia,¹¹⁴ and the David casket, on which Christ is blessing an imperial couple while surrounding scenes illustrate the life of David as a biblical forerunner of and example for Byzantine rulership.¹¹⁵ The ivories would seem to reflect a more general shift toward religious observances as occasions for imperial appearances and representation, as secular manifestations like games and races, sculptures, columnar monuments, memorial coins or medallions, and so on, had become rare by the seventh century.¹¹⁶

Overall, this paper's reading of the Apostle ivory would seem to confirm that the transformation from early to middle Byzantine iconography happened gradually and that change was under way by the time of Heraclius. Later events, such as the rise of Islam, the Arab conquest, and the Iconoclast controversy, may have contributed to the development in various ways, but cannot have caused this change, as it had already taken root before.¹¹⁷ Once again, Byzantine art and culture appear to have developed self-sufficiently and self-referentially rather than driven by outside influence.¹¹⁸

Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, ed. J. Bogdanović (New York, 2018), 107–23.

114 K. Corrigan, "The Ivory Scepter of Leo VI: A Statement of Post-Iconoclastic Imperial Ideology," *ArtB* 60 (1978): 407–16; G. Bühl and H. Jehle, "Des Kaisers altes Zepter: Des Kaisers neuer Kamm," *Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz* 39 (2002): 289–306; H. Maguire, "The Heavenly Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC, 1997), 247–58, at 249–50.

115 H. Maguire, "The Art of Comparing in Byzantium," *ArtB* 70 (1988): 88–103, at 89–93; Tsamakda, "König David als Typus," 33–36, figs. 6–8; A. Cutler and P. Niewöhner, "Towards a History of Byzantine Ivory Carving from the Late 6th to the Late 9th Century," in *Mélanges Catherine Jolivet-Lévy*, ed. S. Brodbeck et al., *TM* 20.2 (Paris, 2016), 89–107, at 102–6; E. Galardi, "The David Casket: A Gift for the Byzantine Empress," *CahArch* 59 (2022): 20–37.

116 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 64–79; Berger, "Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions," 73–87.

117 M. Whittow suggested as much in his review of G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre*, *JEH* 49.3 (1998): 510–11. See also L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (New York, 2011).

118 Cf. R. S. Nelson, "Byzantine Art vs Western Medieval Art," in *Byzance et le monde extérieur: Contacts, relations, échanges*, ed. M. Balard et al. (Paris, 2005), 255–70; P. Niewöhner, "The Late Late Antique Origins of Byzantine Palace Architecture," in *The Emperor's House: Palaces from Augustus to the Age of Absolutism*, ed. M. Featherstone et al. (Berlin, 2015), 31–52; N. Melvani, "Late, Middle,

Conclusion

This article employs two kinds of arguments. One is based on factual observations, the other proposes suggestions only. Of the former, one observation concerns the larger figure in the place of honor on the apostle's right side, with a dress, coiffure, and wreath that do not illustrate a bishop but rather a victorious emperor. Accordingly, the ivory does not represent thirty-six bishops of Alexandria, as Strzygowski thought, but more likely illustrate Heraclius, who was the only early Byzantine emperor to have left Constantinople and ventured as far as Jerusalem or any other Near Eastern city, where stepped merlons—as shown above the ivory gate—were customary.

Of the latter, each suggestion is not without alternative, but overall they appear to be confirmed by adding up to a complex scenario that can explain the Apostle ivory, fit the historical context, and slot seamlessly into the history of Byzantine art. It is therefore suggested that the city in the background of the ivory is Jerusalem, where the victorious Heraclius celebrated his first adventus, and the ivory gate is the Damascus Gate, the only gate that had three doors as well as a pair of flanking towers. This identification finds support in the reading of the architecture behind the ivory gate, which, it is posited, represents the semi-circular square and central column inside Jerusalem's north gate as depicted on the Madaba mosaic map. Strzygowski proposed Alexandria instead of Jerusalem, but the newly observed bump on the apostle's forehead is a point in favor of an identification with James the Just and Jerusalem. Moreover, this explanation gains additional strength when considered in relation to the

Persian conquest of Jerusalem that was described as a massacre of the Christian population and blamed on Jews: As the contemporary events were perceived in the same light as James's martyrdom, also at the hand of Jews, the apostolic bishop was ideally placed to represent the city vis-à-vis its liberator, Heraclius, and also served to underscore the emperor's merits in restoring Christian supremacy.

Finally, relating all this to Heraclius's humble stance in Jerusalem, as attested on the door lintel at Mren and by the later Latin accounts, is again only speculative, but it does provide a plausible scenario for the introduction of new iconography. The novel way of depicting the emperor primarily as a humble Christian rather than as a godlike ruler should have come about some time between the Barberini ivory in the sixth century and the Trier ivory in the eighth, and Heraclius's behavior in Jerusalem or the need to authenticate the True Cross provides a likely occasion. The innovation also includes the change from consular and imperial ivories of the fourth to sixth century to religious themes. Accordingly, the Apostle ivory could be a missing link of Byzantine art history and should be included in future discussions of the genre, although it is badly preserved and cannot be restored with certainty.

Georg August-Universität
Göttingen
Christliche Archäologie und
Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte
Nikolausberger Weg 15
37073 Göttingen
Germany
philippniewoehner@hotmail.com

and Early Byzantine Sculpture in Palaiologan Constantinople," in *Spolia Reincarnated: Afterlives of Objects, Materials and Spaces in Anatolia from Antiquity to the Ottoman Era*, ed. I. Jevtić and S. Yalman (Istanbul, 2019), 149–69; P. Niewöhner and S. Sezer, "Alexander the Great Engineer and Inventor: Elite Representation in Western Asia Minor and Early Byzantine Origins of the Later Romance Tradition and Iconography," *BZ* 116.3 (2023): 861–84.

 THANKS FOR IMAGES, HELP, AND ADVICE ARE due to Catherine Adam-Sigas, Wolfram Brandes, Martin Dennert, Erin L. Thompson, and the anonymous reviewers.